

**MANSFIELD DOWNTOWN PARTNERSHIP
PLANNING AND DESIGN COMMITTEE
Mansfield Downtown Partnership office**

Tuesday, December 15, 2015

MINUTES

Members: Chair Steve Bacon, Sondra Astor-Stave, Karla Fox, Manny Haidous, Chris Kueffner, Peter Millman, Greg Padick, and Betsy Paterson

Staff: Cynthia van Zelm

Guests: Kristin Schwab, UConn Associate Professor of Landscape Architecture; UConn students Michael Bruno, Yuting Liu, and Guang Zhou

1. Call to Order

Steve Bacon called the meeting to order at 5:05 pm.

2. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

3. Approval of Minutes from November 17, 2015

Betsy Paterson made a motion to approve the November 17, 2015 minutes. Karla Fox seconded the motion. Mr. Bacon, Mr. Haidous, Mr. Kueffner, and Mr. Padick abstained. The motion was approved.

4. Discussion of Storrs Center Phase 2 Public Spaces Plan

Mr. Bacon reiterated that he, Kristin Schwab, and Cynthia van Zelm had met to do a walkthrough of the downtown to review public areas that could be improved. Mr. Bacon had also met with Ms. van Zelm and Lou Marquet with LeylandAlliance.

At its December meeting, the Partnership Board of Directors approved a contract with UConn to prepare the plan with \$3,000 as a stipend for the students.

Ms. van Zelm provided a copy of the contract between the Partnership and UConn to the Committee.

Mr. Bacon and Ms. van Zelm said some of the places to be reviewed as part of the plan include the area between Brueggers and Dunkin Donuts; the courtyard area near Bliss; the courtyard area underneath the Oaks walkway; the parking garage; in front of the Nash-Zimmer Transportation Center; and the wall near the Post Office.

Chris Kueffner said he thought the courtyard near Geno's and Mooyah's should also be reviewed. Ms. Schwab said they will include this in their inventory.

Ms. Schwab said she and her students just completed a walk of the area. They wanted to get feedback from the Committee on priorities and ask a few questions. Three of the four students working on the plan were present – Michael Bruno, Yuting Liu, and Guang Zhao. The students introduced themselves and provided some background on where they are from and why they are interested in the project.

Ms. Schwab said the students will start their work over the UConn break.

She said the Town Square set a good precedent for what can be done in the public spaces. The various elements that will be considered include site furniture, plantings, art (2D or 3D), and lighting.

Each student will be assigned two or three areas and come up with some alternatives.

The plan will also look at wayfinding signage. What else is needed? What type of character do we want?

The idea of an urban trail which was included in the comprehensive plan that Ms. Schwab did with her students a few years ago, was discussed. Ms. Schwab said there is interest in realizing that concept. How do you connect the downtown by an urban trail out to other parts of the downtown?

Ms. Schwab said she will likely take the lead on the management and funding piece that is part of the scope of work.

The goal is to develop a base of work in early January, and to hold an initial presentation with stakeholders in March. Work would wrap up in May.

Mr. Bruno described the walk for the Committee. He asked if there was an issue with fire access in the courtyard next to Brueggers. Ms. van Zelm will follow-up with the Town Fire Marshal.

Mr. Bacon asked if the Brueggers seating area would also be reviewed.

Mr. Bruno and Ms. Schwab said the blank walls outside the garage and near the elevators could be enhanced by art. They both said that art can serve as a reference point for directions. Art on the walls near the elevators could also be seen from the street.

Ms. Schwab asked for Rudy Favretti's sketch for the Post Office wall. Ms. van Zelm will forward to Ms. Schwab.

Ms. Schwab said she is waiting for auto cad files from Mr. Marquet so work can begin.

Peter Millman mentioned the sidewalk from Royce Circle, past the Oaks apts., to the Main Street Homes area as an area that may need improvement as it leads you to dumpsters.

Ms. van Zelm said that Mr. Marquet could not be at this meeting but the goal is for him to meet with Ms. Schwab and her students soon.

Betsy Paterson said whatever is implemented needs to be as functional and low maintenance as possible.

Mr. Bacon advocated for moveable furniture to accommodate a variety of events.

Mr. Millman advocated for more outdoor furniture.

Mr. Kueffner likes the idea of an optical tour.

Manny Haidous said he likes the idea of sculpture as well and also suggested that lighting be improved in some areas including the lighting near the Geno's/Mooyah's courtyard.

Greg Padick said the weather elements of wind, rain, sun, snow, etc. should be taken into account. The area needs to be inviting year round. For example, the sun could affect the orientation of benches.

Mr. Padick suggested looking at both short and long term priorities.

Ms. Schwab said there can be some low cost short-term ideas to keep interest and momentum going while seeking funding.

Mr. Padick said water is always an attractive feature. Water walls? Ms. Schwab said Paley's Park in NYC has a water wall.

Mr. Padick said that while this might be beyond the scope, there are a few good areas in the adjacent Whetten Woods that would be ideal for additional seating. He is involved with Joshua's Trust and wants to ensure the connection from Storrs Center to the Whetten Woods trail is implemented. Ms. Schwab said she has seen good examples of art in the woods.

Ms. Schwab, Mr. Bruno, Mr. Guang, and Ms. Liu left the meeting at 6 pm.

5. Update on Storrs Center

Ms. van Zelm said Bliss opened two weeks ago.

She said twenty-eight of the forty-two Main Street Homes have sold. Mr. Millman said good progress is being made.

Mr. Bacon asked about the parking. Ms. van Zelm said the issues in the parking garage have been solved. There are still some issues of contractor parking on the streets although that is much improved. The issue of parking for the grab and go places such as Dunkin Donuts and Brueggers Bagels will be an on-going issue. Karla Fox said it will be important to see how parking pans out after Storrs Center is completely occupied.

6. Update on Partnership Strategic Planning Process

Ms. van Zelm said five consultants have been interviewed by a Partnership steering committee to undertake an organizational strategic plan for the Partnership. Mr. Bacon said part of this process will be to review this Committee's role going forward.

7. Other

Ms. van Zelm will check with Mr. Marquet to see if he is prepared to come to the Committee with the closeout of Sustainability Guidelines for Phase 1 and Phase 2. Ms. van Zelm will check with Ms. Schwab on whether she and her students would be ready to come back to the Committee in January.

8. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 6:23 pm.

Minutes prepared by Cynthia van Zelm